Allen W. Jackson, Architect: Designer of the Cambridge Skating Club's Clubhouse

Annette LaMond

When I began working on this profile of the architect of our much-loved clubhouse, I expected that it would be two or three pages plus illustrations. But I found much more material on Allen W. Jackson (1875-1949) than I expected, hence the greater length of this paper. With eLibrary databases, I was able to trace Jackson's family to earliest colonial times, and could have gone back even further. Those records document ancestors who strove to support large families, but also contributed greatly to their community. As for our architect, newly digitized books, magazines, and newspapers revealed pieces of information that, when assembled, create a surprisingly detailed portrait. I was moved by the life of a man, born in the second half of the 19th century, just before the world was transformed by electric lights, gas engines, telephones, gramophones, moving pictures, and more. The son of a third-generation candle- and soap-maker, Jackson graduated from MIT on the cusp of the 20th century as modernism was beginning to redefine society. He was well-traveled, a man of the arts and culture, but like his forebears, he also sought to *improve the lives of others. He suffered the loss of his father as* a boy. It is likely that sport helped him recover. In college, he was a member of several athletic teams, and as an architect, he advocated for year-round community recreation facilities in Cambridge. Having come to know so much about the events in Allen Jackson's life, I like to think that the commission for the Cambridge Skating Club's clubhouse was the most gratifying of his career.

By Annette LaMond *April 2023*

Allen W. Jackson, Architect: Designer of the Cambridge Skating Club's Clubhouse

The Cambridge Skating Club's clubhouse is one of the most distinctive buildings in Cambridge – at once functional and magical. Yet few people can name the clubhouse's architect – Allen Winchester Jackson – or know that other houses he designed are dotted all over the city's map. Old Cambridge boasts an amazing variety of architectural styles, and the houses designed by Jackson contribute greatly to that variation.¹ Of course, I am biased, but of all the city's beautiful houses, our clubhouse stands alone in delighting members and passersby, from every angle, inside and out.

In celebrating the club's 125-year history, let us recognize Allen Jackson, the architect whose clubhouse has given us so much pleasure since its doors opened to welcome skaters in December 1930.

This paper begins with a summary of the history of the founding of the club with a ready-made clubhouse, and more than 30 years on, the purchase of the property and building of a new clubhouse.² Then comes a biographical sketch of the architect to whom we are so grateful. The following sections profile Jackson's other work in Cambridge and beyond.

The First Clubhouse

Some people assume that the clubhouse dates to the founding of the Cambridge Skating Club in December 1897. This is not the case. When Chicago-born Frederick Swift proposed that Annie Longfellow Thorp's 1¼-acre field might serve as an ice rink, it had the benefit of coming with a structure that could be converted to provide comforts for skaters. Sitting on the north edge of the property, this building – a bowling alley – had in a previous life served a predecessor club on the banks of the Charles.³

With both modest dues and rent, the Cambridge Skating Club thrived from the beginning, enjoyed by serious figure skaters and recreational skaters of all ages.⁴ However, the club was a tenant-at-will and its income only just met expenses – facts that caused the club's board some anxiety about the future. After a small dues increase during World War I, the club began to enjoy a margin of revenue over expenses, not large, but sufficient to begin a property-acquisition fund.⁵ In 1920, with an accumulating reserve, an overture was made to Mrs. Thorp.⁶ But she was not inclined to sell her field, which – it should be emphasized – was an increasingly valuable piece of real estate, particularly attractive to apartment house developers, who were at work throughout the city.⁷ Indeed, a number of apartment buildings – including one on the other side of Longfellow Park – were changing the landscape of the neighborhood. And so, through the 1920s, a question hung in the air: would the club need to find a new home somewhere else in Cambridge?



Photograph of the bowling alley turned clubhouse on the north edge of the property, February 15, 1899, likely taken by ice committee chair, George H. Browne. Note the large expanse of ice, snowbanks far taller than the man at the left in the photo,. To members today, the clearing of the ice to the very edges after a blizzard is nothing short of miraculous. For more on the continent-spanning weather event memorialized in the photograph, see "An Epic Winter" on the Cambridge Skating Club website.

Club Is Able to Buy the Property and Build a New Clubhouse

Then in June 1930, a call from Mrs. Thorp brought happy news. She was prepared to sell. And thanks to prudent management of the property-acquisition fund, the board was prepared financially to make an offer without calling on members for additional funds. At a special board meeting, it was agreed to purchase the property and also to build a new clubhouse. The bowling-alley clubhouse – nearly 50 years old and showing its age – did not match the club's prominent place in the figure-skating world.⁸

At the beginning of August, with property purchase finalized, the board appointed Allen W. Jackson, a Cambridge architect, to prepare plans for a new clubhouse. Jackson was given a rough sketch of the club's necessities with the instruction: "Give us these in a good looking clubhouse – make it unique and remembering that no one has to live in it, make it gay." Plans called for the clubhouse to be located at the south end of the property so that the shadow of the clubhouse with its tall roof would shade the approach to the ice, thus providing some bonus days of skating each season.

Within three weeks of receiving the commission, Mr. Jackson submitted a sketch for a clubhouse in the old Norwegian wooden style with high-pitched tiled gables.⁹



Allen W. Jackson's architectural rendering of the clubhouse, 1930, modified in 1937 when the porch railing was painted over. The original railing may be seen in the *Boston Evening Transcript* article.

An agreement with a building contractor was signed in late September, and on December 16, the clubhouse was opened – just in time for the first day of the skating season. With strong red and blue colors, gargoyles, and distinctive weather vane pair skaters, the clubhouse was without question "unique" and "gay." Atop the cupola, the weather vane silhouette of pair skaters marked the club as a rendezvous for lovers of the sport of figure skating.¹⁰

As the club settled into the new clubhouse, a call for decorations went out. It produced sturdy fireplace andirons (still in use) and an antique clock, circa 1840, that found a new home above the fireplace.¹¹ Other donations – an elk's head – was hung above the clock, and a companion caribou head,



The building of the clubhouse was news in Boston, as well as in Cambridge. Note the illustration in the article shows the original porch railing.



Postcard view of clubhouse from the ice, illuminated by Japanese lanterns, on a carnival night, c. 1930s.



Clubhouse interior (*House Beautiful*, February 1933). Note the legend – "Power Perfected Becomes Grace" – had not yet been carved on the fireplace balcony beam.

above the entrance.¹² A decorative grace note was added, when a scholar-member and devotee of figure skating, suggested that the beam above the fireplace be carved with a legend – "Power perfected becomes grace" – a line from a poem by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.¹³

Then a challenge to the club: The season of 1936–37, just six years after the inauguration of the new clubhouse, was the warmest in the club's history – only 12 days of skating around Christmas and early January. Coming soon after two poor ice seasons earlier in the decade, the club's board was alarmed. Looking to new outdoor artificial ice rinks elsewhere – Cleveland, New York, Los Angeles – the board began to study the options for a refrigerated system. If such a system was feasible, the club would need an expanded clubhouse.

Once again, the board turned to Allen Jackson. He quickly produced a design for an expanded clubhouse to support a refrigerated rink (85 x 185 feet) and associated activities. Jackson believed in anticipating additions, and he clearly had anticipated the club's need for larger quarters. (To look at the archived blueprints for the proposed expansion is to appreciate his architect's foresight.) Jackson's rendering, which hangs in the entrance hall of the clubhouse, provided a basement room for mechanicals, a locker room, more open space, and a kitchen.¹⁴

Alas, the plans for artificial ice did not move forward – viewed, understandably, as too risky in a time of seemingly endless economic depression. Whatever one's feelings about the board's decision not to proceed with refrigerated ice, it is regrettable that Jackson's plan for an expanded clubhouse was not built.



Architect's drawing showing an expanded clubhouse to accommodate a refrigerated ice rink, 1937. Note the proposal rendering was placed over the 1930 original, modified to remove the porch railing . It is this drawing that hangs in the entrance hall of the clubhouse.

Of course, Jackson's clubhouse has undergone some renovations since the 1930s – extension of the balcony and completion of the second-floor office with two added windows, re-purposing of storage space for shower rooms, transformation of a main-room alcove into a kitchen, expansion of the equipment shed, and modification of the porch and its railing. But all changes blended into the original unobtrusively. If only the next change to the clubhouse could be the realization of Jackson's plan for an addition.

But Back to the Architect... Who Was Allen W. Jackson?

In 1930, Allen W. Jackson (1875–1949) was the right architect, at the right time in his career, available at the right time for the club. Jackson had lived in Cambridge for over 30 years, and knew the club as a member with four children. He also had a wide acquaintance in the city through his membership in civic clubs and organizations, including the Park Commission. By 1930, he had designed some 20 houses in "Old Cambridge," and renovated nearly a dozen others. Of special relevance to the club, he was recognized for house designs that were sensitive to their siting in the landscape. Even his MIT thesis – "A Country Club" – was to the point.

Although Jackson was well known in Cambridge, he was not a lifelong Cantabrigian. He had been born in nearby Newton, where his family's roots extended back to the 1640s. Evidence of the centuries' long prominence of the Jackson family in Newton can be found in the annals of the town's politics and business (an early town history was written by a great-uncle), the historic Jackson Homestead (a documented stop on the Underground Railroad)¹⁵, and dozens of family gravestones in the town's East Parish Burying Ground.



Tombstone of Edward Jackson (born in London, February 3, 1602, and died in Newton in June 17, 1681) in Newton's Old East Parish Burying Ground. Of the cemetery's 700 gravestones, sixty-nine belong to Jacksons, and dozens more to members of related families.

When Allen Jackson was born in 1875, it would have been reasonable to expect that Newton would be his lifelong residence. However, six years later, his family made a surprising move – from Newton to St. Paul, Minnesota. The move was a matter of economic necessity: Jackson's father, Frederick,



The Frederick Jackson family home (built in 1882) at 467 Ashland Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota.

was a candlemaker – a business that had been in decline for some time. Accordingly, he looked to other opportunities, and St. Paul was a fast-growing river city, attracting emigrants not only from Europe, but also New England. And so, Frederick Jackson moved his family from their ancestral town to Minnesota, where he became a partner in a hardware company with two partners, one of whom also hailed from Massachusetts.

The partnership thrived, and the Jackson family settled into their adopted city. They built a house, rich in art and crafts– style architectural detail, that still stands proud. Curious? Google "467 Ashland Avenue, St. Paul." The experience of seeing the new house take form must have been a formative one for the future architect.

Then tragedy struck. Along with the rapid development of the St. Paul–Minneapolis area came summer outbreaks of typhoid. In the fall of 1886, Allen's father fell victim to the disease and died after a month's illness. Jackson was 11 at the time of his father's death – a loss that came soon after the drowning death of a friend's father. (The deaths created a lifelong bond between the two boys.) Compounding the grief, Jackson's oldest sister, Clara, would die the next year.

It is hard to imagine the pain caused by the deaths of father and sister. Yet, life does go on, and six years later, the 18-year-old Allen Jackson returned to Massachusetts

The Jackson Family of Newton

Jackson's fifth great-grandfather, Edward Jackson (1602–1681), arrived in New England in 1641, and was among the first settlers of Cambridge Village – now Newton. (A brother had preceded him in 1639.) A man of some means, he bought a house with several acres of land at what is now Newton Corner, and then in 1646, a 500-acre farm. Over the next decades, Edward Jackson would become the largest land owner in the settlement, with holdings amounting to 1,600 acres in the vicinity of today's Newton Corner and Newtonville.¹

Edward Jackson's stature as a farmer was matched by his involvement in the civic and religious life of both colony and town. He played a leading role in the separation of Newton from Cambridge, though he died just before the town gained political independence. Jackson's generative power was also notable – over 40 of his descendants were said to have served in the American Revolution.

One of those descendants – Allen Jackson's great-grandfather Timothy Jackson² (1756–1814) – further elevated the family's profile in Newton. After the Revolutionary War, he returned to Newton to farm, addressed shaky family finances, taught in the local school, and then, involved himself in the town's civic life (as deputy sheriff, justice of the peace, school committee member, town selectman, and more). In 1802, with others, he established a soap- and candle-making business in Boston, that solidified the family's fortunes. In 1809, he built the Federal-style house on the family's old farm land that is now the Jackson Homestead and Museum.³

Timothy's oldest son, William Jackson (1783–1855) (Allen Jackson's great uncle), succeeded his father as one of Newton's most prominent men – managing the family's candle and soap factory and other business interests (as a railroad agent and bank president). At the same time, he led a public career in the town (school board member, selectman, real estate development board, church deacon, head of the temperance society, secretary of the town's female academy). He also served a term in the state legislature, and two terms in the U.S. Congress (1831–1835). An ardent abolitionist, he made the family "homestead" a station on the Underground Railroad. Like Jacksons before him, he had an impressive number of children – thirteen (with two wives) survived into adulthood, most of them to old age.

Allen's grandfather, Edmond Jackson (1795-1872), was the youngest of William Jackson's brothers. Though not the head of the family, city census records indicate that he was prosperous, and also engaged in the chandlery business. Allen's father, Frederick Jackson, was the younger of Edmund's two sons. Born in 1841, Frederick served in the Civil War, enlisting in a Massachusetts battalion in May 1862. Wounded at White Hall in North Carolina, he mustered out in May 1863. After returning to Newton, he too worked as a chandler, and in 1869, married Harriet Allen, who had been raised in the town. Frederick and Harriett Jackson had four children -Clara (1870), Louise (1873), Allen (1875), and Fredericka (1877).

to study at MIT. (This decision may have been influenced by the fact that the son of one of his father's business partners was a student at the Boston school.) At the same time, Jackson's surviving older sister, Louise Williams Jackson, enrolled at the Boston MFA School. (She would become a well-regarded Cambridge artist.¹⁶) Jackson's mother and younger sister, Fredericka, followed them back to Massachusetts, first moving to Newton and then to Cambridge.¹⁷

As far as Jackson's life at MIT, the evidence in the Institute's yearbooks suggests that he was a sociable young man, comfortable in the role of toastmaster and prophecy-giver at class dinners. Jackson belonged to a fraternity (D.K.E.) and a number of clubs, including the Architectural Society (which he served as secretary), the Yacht Club, the Tennis Association (he was the reigning champion in 1896–97), and the Chess Club, serving the latter two clubs as president. Later, Jackson found expression for his social nature through the activities of the Cambridge Dramatic Social

Club as well as church theatrical productions.¹⁸ (What did people do before television? In Cambridge, many created their own entertainment.)

While at MIT, Jackson seems to have determined to be a residential architect. His family's Newton roots must have been influential. One can imagine the impression that the ancestral Jackson Homestead, once home to his grandfather, would have made on the young Allen Jackson. Built on a foundation of granite blocks brought from Quincy by oxcart, the "homestead" had six fireplaces with hand-carved mantels and a kitchen fireplace and oven used for cooking; hand-hewn beams, bricks and boards from the earlier 1670 house; a 300-year-old well in the first-floor laundry room; and the original front door.

The experience of moving to a new home in St. Paul had surely added to Jackson's interest in houses. The years in Minnesota also gave the advantage of knowing another region of the country and a different vernacular



SKETCH IN VENICE By A. W. Jackson

Catalogue, Boston Architectural Club Exhibition in the Gallery of the Boston Art Club, May 2–14, 1904. Another sketch – of Ospedale del Ceppo, Pistoja – was in the exhibit, but not included in the catalogue.

architecture. Perhaps it was in Minnesota that Jackson gained an appreciation for Norwegian wooden houses, as well as what skaters would appreciate in a shelter.

Like other architects of the time, Jackson expanded his horizons by traveling to Europe to study Old World building crafts and styles. In fact, Jackson made his first European trip with his sisters and mother the summer before graduating from MIT.¹⁹ Several years later, Jackson exhibited sketches from his Italian travels at the Boston Art Club.²⁰ In addition to his architectural observations, Jackson clearly honed his drawing skills on his travels.

In 1900, three years after graduating from MIT, Allen Jackson married Elizabeth Balch, who had graduated from Smith College in 1894. Like Allen Jackson's father, his wife's father had deep roots in Massachusetts (Essex County, in his case) and had sought economic opportunity in the Midwest.²¹ Mr. Balch had prospered in Iowa, where he became involved with the building of utility infrastructure, including as president of Northwestern Bell Telephone Company.

The newlywed Jacksons began their married life in Cambridge. Their first address was a new apartment building at 1010 Massachusetts Avenue, just outside of Harvard Square.²² (The building still exists.) Following a sojourn in Florence in 1902, the couple had a daughter – Harriet (1903), then two more children, Edmund (1906), and Nancy (1913).

In 1903, Mr. and Mrs. Jackson established themselves in Old Cambridge by building a house at 202 Brattle Street, near Colonial-era Elmwood, James Russell Lowell's estate.



202 Brattle Street (Note that utitly poles and wires were removed from Brattle and the city's other main streets in the mid-1920s.)



202 Brattle Street, viewed from Lowell Memorial Park.

Recent Photographs of Cambridge Houses Designed by Allen W. Jackson*



202 Brattle Street (1903)



24 Francis Avenue (1906)



11–15 Elmwood Avenue (1908)



33 Reservoir Street (1909)



229 Brattle Street (1910)



1 Bryant Street (1911)



70 Francis Avenue (stable altered to dwelling) (1912)



7 Berkeley Place (1913)



138 Irving Street (1912)



10 Garden Terrace (1913)



25 Lake View Avenue (1912)



19 Hubbard Park (1913)



16 Francis Avenue (1915)



29 Highland Street (1922)



4-6 Dunstable Road (1924)



73 Francis Avenue (1926)



48 Highland Street (1927)



8 Lincoln Lane (1927)



40 Willard Street (Cambridge Skating Club) (1930)

Cambridge Houses with Additions, Alterations, and or Garages by Allen W. Jackson:

- 12 Lake View Avenue (1908)
- 11 Scott Street (1909)
- 43 Reservoir Street (1913)
- 16 Highland Street (1914)
- 7 Longfellow Park (1914)
- 23 Hawthorn Street (1919)
- 10 Kirkland Place (1920)
- 88 Appleton Street (1922)



15 Kennedy Road (designed for Jackson's older daughter) (1932)

- 14 Chauncey Street (1922)
- 14 Concord Avenue (1923, razed in 1963 to make way for an apartment building)
- 54 Highland Street (1932)

Institutional Work in Cambridge by Allen W. Jackson:

- 10 Buckingham Street, alterations to the Buckingham School (1917)
- 280-82 Franklin Street, office building into stores and offices (1922).



161 Brattle Street (5 Kennedy Road) (1939)

• First Parish in Cambridge, alterations to church interior (1913). (The renovation was featured, with photographs, in *Architecture*, April 1915, pp. 112–114.)

These lists, which are organized chronologically, are drawn from *Cambridge Buildings and Architects*, an online resource developed by Harvard archivist Christopher Hail. Although Jackson had some inherited means, it is likely his wife provided funds for the project. It was "Elizabeth B. Jackson" listed as the owner of the property in the 1916 *Bromley Atlas*.

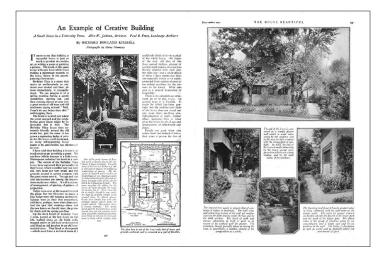
In any case, the new Brattle Street house and its beautiful garden was featured in newspapers, magazines, and Jackson's own writing, including a book on the half-timber style that included many photographs, interior as well as exterior. The house was newsworthy in its English Revival style, "back to street" siting, and unusual features, particularly the "garage room." See photographs on pages 6–7. For more about the house, see pages 10–11.

The publicity surely contributed to Jackson's success in attracting clients. Jackson soon won commissions for major houses in Wellesley and Long Island, as well as commissions in Cambridge and nearby towns. A feature article on a wood shingle house at 24 Francis Avenue (designed in 1906) showed that he was adept in styles other than the English Revival. (See page 12.) But as with his own home, Jackson sited the house to give the owners the fullest enjoyment of their side and back gardens. Jackson's creativity in designing and siting a small house at 7 Berkeley Place (designed in 1913), featured in *The House Beautiful*, added to Jackson's reputation. (See right column on this page.)

For a photographic tour of Jackson-designed houses in Cambridge, see pages 7–8; for other Jackson houses in other towns, see page 15.

At the same time that Jackson was building his architectural practice, he was also leading a busy life in the community – in both Boston architectural circles and in Cambridge civic organizations.²³ (Jackson's concern for the community echoed that of his Newton forebears.) Jackson valued his ties to Boston. His architectural office was in Boston, and for some years, he taught architecture and home build-ing at Simmons College. He was a member of the Boston Architectural Club,²⁴ a club not only for architects, but also sculptors, painters, decorative artists, and patrons of the arts. Drawn to the arts and to artists, Jackson contributed work to the club's exhibitions in 1904 and 1908.

Jackson was engaged in Cambridge life too. In 1904, he helped to found a new organization – the Municipal Art Society "to encourage and develop whatever will improve



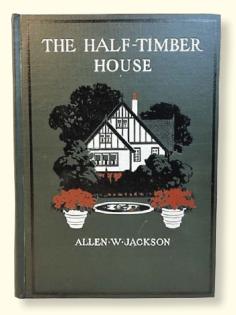


Magazine feature on 7 Berkeley Street. The article cites Jackson's work as an example of house and grounds designed in combination, each in relation to the other, where details quietly reveal themselves. Richard Bowland Kimball, "An Example of Creative Building," *The House Beautiful*, November 1920, pp. 376–378.

the external aspect of the city and to oppose whatever seems likely to mar its beauty." The news article elaborated on the purpose of the Society as follows:²⁵

The society shall through its committees offer without charge such expert advice to individuals regarding the external aspect and design of proposed new structures, both public and private, as shall tend to encourage a more artistic and coherent treatment of the appearance of our streets, and shall co-operate with the city government as far as practicable in securing a greater measure of artistic success in our public buildings, parks, lamp posts, planting, shelters, bridges, and other municipal features. It shall take such steps as from time to time shall seem advisable to arouse public interest in a more beautiful Cambridge and in raising the standard of public taste, and shall exercise its influence in safeguarding the city's artistic interest against unwise municipal or legislative enactments, and shall support such enactments as shall serve the artistic growth of the city.

Jackson's House at 202 Brattle Street



Allen W. Jackson, The Half-Timber House, Its Origin, Design, Modern Plan and Construction. New York: Robert M. McBride & Co, 1919 (2nd edition)

A model of the half-timber style, Jackson's house at 202 Brattle Street was also notable in its siting (with living rooms on the south side of the house away from the street), its embrace of an existing great oak tree into the design, and its incorporation of a garage room (termed an "automobile house" in a *Cambridge Tribune* article) next to the kitchen. In building and publicizing his house, Jackson may be said to have anticipated the "show house" phenomenon.

After the house was completed and landscaped, a five-page spread in House and Garden magazine provided more publicity. The author of the article emphasized the care that the architect had taken in choice of house site:

The success of the house is in no small measure due to the acceptance of the conditions as they were found, following the lines of least resistance, so that in the completed whole everything seems inevitable, and as if it could not have been otherwise. ... [the house] has already been absorbed by its surroundings, and become as much a part of the landscape, and as harmonious with it, as the pines and oaks themselves. *Higher praise than this for a house that* is as yet only a little over a year old, it is indeed hard to bestow.



202 Brattle Street (1903), in November 2020



"A House [202 Brattle Street] in Cambridge, Massachusetts," House and Garden, December 1905, pp. 240-244

A HOUSE IN CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS LEN W. JA



In the technical building literature, Jackson's house also received attention as an example of the use of exterior plaster as a substitute for wood.

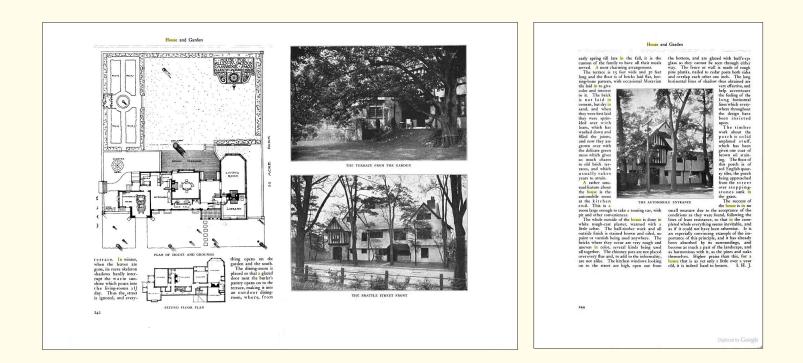
Jackson added to the publicity by writing a book, *The Half-Timber House*, published in 1912, with a second edition in 1919. The book provided a history of half-timber style design and construction in England, and descriptions of how the style was being adapted in the United States. As for adaptions, Jackson described affordable methods for achieving the look of a medieval half-timber that were maintainable and fire-resistant. A treat for today's Cambridge reader: the number of photographs, interior and exterior, of the Brattle Street house. Though the book is somewhat technical, Jackson wrote with humor to engage a general reader beyond the professional audience. For example, regarding the incorporation of the garage into the house, he noted the advantages of "avoiding the discomforts of a cold work-room and the freezing of water in the car's radiator."

The Half-Timber House was widely advertised in magazines – American Architect, American Homes and Gardens, Country Life, Country Life in America, Field and Stream, House Beautiful, House and Garden, Suburban Life, Travel, among others. And it was well reviewed. A review in the Boston Herald was reprinted in MIT's Technology Review, which must have been particularly gratifying to the author. Other references to 202 Brattle Street:

—J. Lovell Little, Jr., "Exterior Plaster as a Substitute for Wood," *The Architectural Review*, April 1906, p. 59. A photograph of the house from the street is captioned: "A House in Cambridge, Mass. Allen W. Jackson, Architect and Owner."

—Aymar Embry II, *One Hundred Country Houses*, Century Co., New York, 1909.

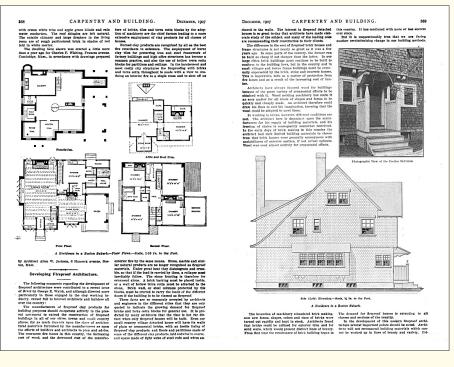
—Rollin Lynde Hartt, "Houses with Their Backs to the Street," *House and Garden*, April 1916, pp. 16–17.

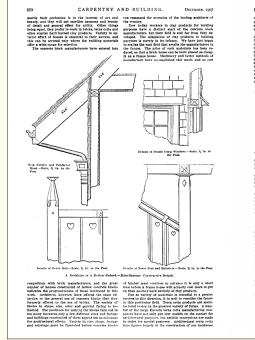


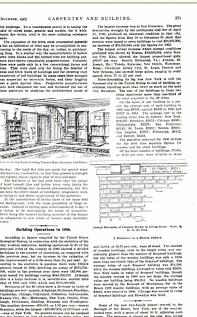
A Residence in a Boston Suburb

Magazine feature on 24 Francis Avenue. "A Residence in a Boston Suburb," *Building Age*, December 1907, pp. 367–371.









The Society's work was divided among four committees – streets, buildings, legislation and publicity, and parks. Jackson served on the buildings committee with H. Langford Warren (Harvard professor of architecture) and Charles H. Moore (Harvard professor of fine arts).²⁶ Other members: Charles Eliot (Harvard's president), Frederick L. Olmsted, Jr. (landscape architect), George Howland Cox (Cambridge Park Commission), and J.G. Thorp (husband of Annie Longfellow Thorp). It is notable that the "great and good" of Cambridge would include a man as young Jackson, not yet 30, in their new society.²⁷

Other groups to which Jackson belonged included the Men's Clubs of the seven churches around Harvard Square, the governing council (on the house committee) of the Cambridge YMCA, the Cambridge Club, and the Economy Club, serving the later on the membership committee, as treasurer, and then as president.²⁸

In 1919, Jackson became the first president of a group that formed to further the recreation activities of the various playgrounds of the City. Christened the Community Recreation Association of Cambridge, the organization sought to increase greater interest in organized recreation and to secure its continuation throughout the entire year instead of confining it only to the summer months.²⁹ The new association was heartily endorsed by the mayor,³⁰ and Jackson was subsequently named to the Cambridge Park Commission and then the Park and Recreation Commission. (In this capacity, Jackson was, among other projects, involved in the construction of a new athletic building at Russell Field.³¹) At the same time, Jackson also served as president of one the city's settlement houses - the East End Christian Union, helping the organization to find and remodel new quarters.³²

Like her husband, Elizabeth Jackson was engaged in activities to benefit the community.³³ Together, the Jacksons lived a full and busy life – with children, social pastimes, and civic projects. Then, tragedy struck Jackson once more. In February 1921, Elizabeth Jackson died suddenly of pneumonia, leaving her husband and three children, then ages 17, 14, and 7.³⁴ Following his wife's death, Jackson's name does not appear in the Cambridge newspapers for a period of what must have been intense mourning. By the end of the year, reports of Jackson's civic activities began to appear in the newspapers. In 1923, Jackson remarried, and two years later, he and his new wife, Dorothy Quincy Whiton, had a son, Lucius Erskine Whiton Jackson.

In 1924, Jackson's name was put forward for the Cambridge Planning Board. However, the nomination caused a tempest in the City Council. Despite Jackson's qualifications, the Council refused to confirm him on account of a letter that he had written to the Boston Herald four years before.³⁵

That letter had satirized Irish Republican leader Éamon de Valera's clandestine voyage on a British ocean liner to New York in June 1919 (he had been smuggled out of a Liverpool jail to the ship by Irish sailors) – a trip to raise funds and political recognition for an Irish Republic. Viewed from today, the letter seems benign, typical of the humor of the time, but the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic (AARIR) took offense. They vehemently opposed Jackson's appointment to the planning board, suggesting that the Council appoint "some more worldly American." And so, the City did not have the benefit of Jackson's architectural and planning expertise.

An irony – the AARIR was not above casting aspersions on others. After the president of the Cambridge League of Women Voters wrote a letter in support of Jackson, the AARIR leader characterized the League as a "crowd of short-haired dames," adding that the women's organization was "as representative of the womanhood of Cambridge as the 'three tailors of Tooley street' when they petitioned the king [sic] on behalf of the people of London [sic]."³⁶ A further irony: At the time of the brouhaha in the Cambridge City Council over Jackson's letter, de Valera had been caught up in an internal Irish political war, and was interned in a prison in the Irish Free State.

The rejection by the City Council must have been painful, and Jackson gave up his position on the Park Commission. However, he continued to be active in civic clubs and church work. Other happier reasons for less public activity: the birth of his youngest child with his second wife, and the marriages of his two daughters. The pace of Jackson's work slowed as he approached retirement age. One of the last houses that he designed was for his own family – a farm-style house in Lincoln at 9 Page Road.³⁷ Built in 1936, the house – on over two acres – offered bucolic views over neighboring fields.

When Jackson was 69, he and his wife suffered a grievous personal tragedy. On Christmas Eve in 1944, the Jacksons received word that their only child, just 18 years old, had been killed in the war – one of nearly 800 men who died after their ship was torpedoed by a German U-boat.³⁸ Allen Jackson died five years later at the age of 74.

To think of the pain of the Jacksons at the death of their son is terrible, particularly because it was experienced by a man whose clubhouse we love. I would like to suggest that we transform sadness into a determination to treasure and protect Jackson's clubhouse all the more and to honor his contributions to the architectural richness of Cambridge.

Allen Jackson left a legacy of houses, most over 100 years old. Over the decades, Jackson's houses have been appreciated by their successive owners, their neighbors, and by the entire community. That Jackson's work has lasted so long is a reflection of the art and skill that he put into his houses.

In an article published in 1922, Jackson described his view of the designing of a house:

To decide...what makes a house a successful one or a failure is not so easy to determine...to this happy gathering of the architectural virtues in a house, is added that happy connoting of the home life it shelters, then we may be sure we have everything necessary to a "good" house. It means long, patient labor on the part of trained and skilled men. Satisfactory results do not come by chance. The diverse parts of a complicated puzzle do not fall into place at a nod. We must have here the added labor that conceals labor. The more arduous the work, the simpler the result becomes. It takes more muscle to subtract than to add, to leave off than to put on. This is the price we must pay...for worthy satisfying work. Borrowing Jackson's "puzzle" metaphor, every addition or subtraction affects the character of the place. Jackson's clubhouse for the Cambridge Skating Club defined the field at the corner of Mt. Auburn and Willard streets as a destination for skaters, and later for tennis players as well. Said Jackson in a 1918 *Architectural Review* article, "Architecture is as good as it looks."³⁹ I think that everyone would agree, our clubhouse is very good-looking!



The Residence of Mr. John Nolen, Garden Terrace, Cambridge, Mass.

Allen W. Jackson, "Good Houses and Bad," Page of the Seven Arts, *The Christian Science Monitor*, Boston, Tuesday, September 5, 1922

Jackson's client, John Nolen, was a Harvard-trained planner of model towns, garden suburbs, industrial cities, and exposition grounds. A book by Nolen, *New Towns for Old: Achievement in Civic Improvement in Some American Small Towns and Neighborhoods*, was recently reissued by the Library of American Landscape History.

Jackson's Houses Outside of Cambridge

Outside of Cambridge, one of Jackson's early commissions was a country house in the Italian style on a 14-acre property in Huntington, Long Island. The home, which came to be known as "The Monastery," had a huge living room, surrounded by cloisters, covered by a glass roof, 14 master bedrooms, each with an open fireplace, and an Otis elevator at the front entrance. Servants' quarters contained five rooms and parlor. At the main entrance was a three-car garage with chauffeur's quarters and separate heating plant. A superintendent's house had six rooms and two baths.

A review of the Long Island house underscores another characteristic of Jackson's work – attention to detail:

Though the house was built primarily for solid comfort and for the pleasure of a large family of happy children, yet somehow there is a primitive, ecclesiastical air about it, created mainly by the absence of petty unnecessary detail. Every line is direct, every silhouette simple and wall spaces flat, depending upon sunshine and shadow for ornament. Not a discord mars the harmony, yet the many details that go to make up the whole have been assembled from widely diverse places. Jackson's Houses Outside of Cambridge:

- The Monastery, Huntington, Long Island, (1908, razed in 1970)
- 33 Dover Road, Wellesley (1906)
- 200 Common Street, Belmont* (English Revival) (1912)
- 6 Cedar Road, Belmont* (Colonial Revival) (1912)
- 17 Foster Street, Marblehead Neck* (1916) (with Charles M. Baker)
- I.W. McConnell House (address unknown), Auburndale (1917)
- 167 Lovell Road, Watertown* (1925)
- 171 Marsh Road, Belmont (Colonial Revival) (1930)
- 9 Page Road, Lincoln (Colonial Revival) (1936)
- 12 Trapelo Road, Lincoln* (First Congregational Parsonage renovation, undated)
- * In Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System.



The Monastery, Huntington, Long Island, designed by Allen W. Jackson (1908). This is probably the only Jackson house that no longer exists.



The Monastery, from Boston Architectural Club's yearbook for 1908



33 Dover Road, Wellesley (1906)

The house in Wellesley is now a Wellesley College residence, *la Maison Française*.



200 Common Street, Belmont (1912)



I.W. McConnell House (address unknown), Auburndale, Massachusetts (1917)

This photograph is from *The Livable House: Its Plan and Design* by Aymar Embury II, Moffat Yard and Company, New York, 1917, p. 163.

Endnotes

Cambridge houses designed by Jackson are located on Elmwood Avenue, Frances Avenue, Highland Street, Hubbard Park Road, Irving Street, Lincoln Lane, and Reservoir Street, among others. Jackson also renovated a dozen older houses with sensitivity to their original design.

Jackson's Cambridge houses hold their own along side those of other noted architects—Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow, H.H. Richardson, Robert S. Peabody, John G. Stearns, Henry Van Brunt, Frank M. Howe, Lois Lilley Howe, and Eleanor Manning. Indeed, the list of Cambridge houses designed by Jackson appears to be longer than any of the others. Jackson may not be as well known as Peabody and Stearns or Van Brunt and Howe, but his houses have survived and been maintained in excellent condition.

Jackson-designed houses can also be found in Belmont, Newton, Watertown, and Wellesley, four of which have been documented for the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

2 For more on the founding of the Cambridge Skating Club, see the 50th- and 100th-anniversary histories, as well as recent history notes on the club's website.

3 That predecessor club, founded in 1882, was the Cambridge Casino – not a gambling establishment, but a club for social enjoyment, offering bowling, tennis, and boating, at the foot of what is now Ash and Hawthorn streets. The Casino was dissolved in 1895, when its land was sold to the city for its Charles River embankment project. The bowling alley was moved to Mrs. Thorp's field, and the boathouse to the vicinity of De Wolfe Street.

4 Dues were \$5 for a family, \$3 for a single membership, and the annual rent paid to Mrs. Thorp was a portion of property taxes plus maintenance costs associated with the clubhouse and picket fence.

5 According to an account by the club's second president, Arthur Goodridge, in 1917, the club had about \$300 in the bank, and owned a line of hose, some ice scrapers, snow shovels, and little else. 6 In 1920, the club considered purchasing a property on the north side of Reservoir Hill that was available at an advantageous price.

7 Directly across Longfellow Park, an apartment building at 41 Hawthorn Street (Longfellow Chambers) had "shocked" the neighborhood when it went up in 1911. (Susan E. Maycock and Charles M. Sullivan, Building Old Cambridge, p.192) The north side of Memorial Drive subsequently filled in with apartment buildings: at 992-993, the 6-story, 36-unit Strathcona, built in 1914; at 985-986, the 6-story Hampstead Hall built in 1916; at 983-984, the 6-story Radner Hall apartments in 1916; and at 987-989, the 7-story Barrington Court in 1924. See, for example, "Unique Apartments on River Parkway," Cambridge Chronicle, May 13, 1916, p.11 (with sketch on p.1). At nearby 83 Brattle Street, a 6-story apartment building called Wadsworth Chambers had changed the streetscape in 1908.

8 From the time of its founding, the Cambridge Skating Club played an important role in providing outdoor practice ice to the champion skaters of the Boston area – Theresa Weld, Nathaniel Niles, Edward Howland, Edith Rotch, Sherwin Badger, Grace and James Madden, and Maribel Vinson, to name a few. This role would continue into the 1960s.

9 Why Norwegian style? The discussion of architectural style was not recorded, but the choice was likely made to be pleasing to Mrs. Thorp, whose sister-in-law had married famed Norwegian violinist Ole Bull. Over the years, the Thorp family had enjoyed idyllic trips to Norway. The family's affection for the country was well known, so it is likely that Allen Jackson provided a Norwegian design.

10 The designer of the weather vane was Elinor Goodridge, the sister of club president, Arthur Goodridge. She chose to profile actual pair skaters, Andrée Joly and Pierre Brunet two-time Olympic gold medalists (1928 and 1932) and four-time world pairs champions. Brunet was a tall man, six feet in height, and his partner, Joly, petite. In 1924, the French pair startled the skating world by their daring lifts. Later they developed "shadow skating" - individual skating side by side with the same figures executed closely - into a classic part of pairs skating.

11 The donor - Philip L. Spaulding, a clock collector and president of New England Telegraph & Telephone - had salvaged the clock from the Boston Tabernacle in Boston's Bowdoin Square before the building was razed to make way for a telephone company building. Delighted to learn that the club had a place for a three-and-a-half-foot diameter clock, Mr. Spaulding had it put in first-class condition. (An update on this oldest object in the clubhouse: In 2003, the clock's mechanism was refurbished, its face cleaned and repainted, missing minute hand fabricated, frame restored, and scratch-resistant plexiglass added to protect the clock hands from curious children.)

12 Technically still on loan, the caribou head was later moved to a space on a side wall when the balcony was extended.

13 The member was William Frederick Tilton, a German speaker who had earned a doctorate at the University of Freiburg. He suggested (and artfully translated) a line from an 1800 poem, "Four Seasons," by another skating enthusiast, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. In his poem "Winter," Goethe evokes images of skating as an allegory of the journey through life. As for the words selected by William Tilton, they are still an apt motto for skaters, whether devotees of figure skating or hockey.

14 Blueprints of the clubhouse and proposed expansion, along with scans, are in the club's archives. Scanned copies (donated by the club) are also available at the Cambridge Historical Commission.

15 An eighteenth-century farmhouse, known as the Jackson House (not to be confused with the Jackson Homestead) at 125 Jackson Street is also on the National Register of Historic Places. Dated to 1782, the house was restyled in the 1850s to give it Greek Revival features.

16 As an art student, Louise Williams Jackson (1872–1939), studied in Paris with James Abbot McNeill Whistler, and later wrote two articles about the experience – "Influences that shaped Whistler's art" in *Lotus* (December 1903) and "Mr. Whistler as a teacher" in *Brush and Pencil* (June 1900). She soon became known as a portrait painter. The local newspapers mention exhibits in which her work ws shown – one at Browne & Nichols School "Some Fine Canvasses at the Browne and Nichols School—The Cambridge Women and Their Work," (*Cambridge Chronicle*, 5 May 1900, p.8) and a solo show at the Fogg Museum in 1928 (*Cambridge Tribune*, 19 May 1928, p.4).

In addition to her painting, Louise – like her brother – gave her time to community work. With Cornelia James Cannon, she wrote *Social Welfare in Cambridge: A Handbook for Citizens*, published under the auspices of the Social Service committee of the First Church in Cambridge (Unitarian), 1907. She was active with the Cambridge Anti-Tuberculosis Association from the early 1900s into the 1930s, and also advocated for the League of Nations.

17 In 1900, the U.S. Census finds Jackson's mother, Harriet Allen Jackson, and both surviving sisters, Louise and Fredericka, living in Cambridge at 367 Harvard Street. After the death of their mother in 1902, the sisters lived for a time with their brother. Louise later lived at 14 Appian Way and then 8 Acacia Street. The younger sister, Fredericka Hewes Jackson (Mrs. Richard B. Earle) (1878-1964), lived on Channing Street during the early years of her marriage, and later in Providence, Rhode Island, and again in Cambridge during World War II.

18 Some of Jackson's dramatic endeavors are recorded in the Cambridge papers. In February 1909, he appeared in a Cambridge Social Dramatic Club production of Bernard Shaw's You Never Can Tell. The performance was held at Brattle Hall - a popular venue for performances and lectures. Jackson's role - a hotel waiter - placed him at the center of the action from which he delivered observational wisdom that could be played for comic effect. ("Cambridge Amateurs," Cambridge Chronicle, 13 February 1909, p.7) The newspapers record that Jackson directed plays for the Junior Parish of First Unitarian. In 1933, Jackson acted in a Social Dramatic Club staging of a Broadway play. (Cambridge Chronicle, 1 December 1933, p.4) In 1936, Jackson took the stage at First Unitarian amateur night. ("'Major Blows' Night at First Unitarian," Cambridge *Tribune*, 1 May 1936, p.5)

19 Passport applications and ship manifests document European trips in 1896, 1901, 1909, 1921, 1928, as well as four trips to Bermuda.

20 Catalogue, Boston Architectural Club Exhibition in the Gallery of the Boston Art Club, May 2–14, 1904.

21 Born in 1837 in Essex County (Massachusetts), John Kirby Perry Balch moved to Lyons, Iowa, in 1858, joining a brother's business. Following the invention of the telephone, he built the first telephone exchange in the West, inventing (and patenting) some of the parts. Mr. Balch was also associated with other infrastructure companies (water works, roads and bridges) in his adopted state.

22 U.S. Census (1900) records.

23 The following reporting of Jackson's civic work in Cambridge is based largely on a compilation of articles from the Cambridge Public Library's Historic Newspaper Collection. Please contact the author or the club for the document.

24 According to its original charter (1889), the founders created the Boston Architectural Club "for the purpose of associating those interested in the profession of architecture with a view to mutual encouragement and help in studies." The club was envisioned as a broad community not just for architects but also sculptors, painters, decorative artists, and patrons of the arts. In 1944, the group had evolved from a social club to a public educational center, prompting a formal name change to the Boston Architectural Center.

25 The Society was also profiled by Cornelia James Cannon and Louise Williams Jackson [Allen Jackson's sister], Social Welfare in Cambridge: A Handbook for Citizens, published under the auspices of the Social Service committee of the First Church in Cambridge (Unitarian), 1907: The authors describe the Cambridge Municipal Art Society as follows: "This Society was established in 1904. Its Object is to encourage and develop whatever will improve the external aspect of the city and to oppose whatever seems likely to mar its beauty. The work of the society is done largely through four committees, i.e., on streets, buildings, legislation and

publicity, and parks. Membership is acquired only upon the invitation of the executive committee. The annual dues are \$2." The contact for information was Mr. Clarence Blackall, [16] Chauncy Street, Cambridge." p.85.

A side note on Clarence Blackall: He was an architect, who designed Boston's first steel-framed building and a notable list of theaters. In 1929, Mr. and Mrs. Blackall razed their house at 16 Chauncy Street and built a 34-unit apartment building (called the Continental Manor) on the site.

26 *Cambridge Chronicle*, June 25, 1904 ("Officers Elected," p.5, and "Municipal Art Society," p.16).

27 Jackson served on the group's advisory committee through at least June 1908 ("Municipal Art Society," *Cambridge Chronicle*, 7 July 1906, p.12). The Society seems to have stopped meeting around 1915; at least there are no further articles about the Society after that time.

28 Founded in 1872, the Economy Club was a forum for discussion of public questions, not bound by any particular political party or school of thought. "Economy Club's [25th Anniversary] Celebration," *Cambridge Chronicle*, 26 June 1897, p.2. Jackson became treasurer in 1923, and president in 1924. ("Annual Meeting of the Economy Club," *Cambridge Chronicle*, 2 June 1923, p.17, and "Economy Club," *Cambridge Chronicle*, 17 May 1924, p.4.)

29 "Association Formed Here in Cambridge to Direct Recreation," *Cambridge Tribune*, 19 April 1919, p.9.

30 "Recreation Committee Will Launch Campaign May 28," *Cambridge Chronicle*, 24 May 1919, p.14; "The Importance of Community Recreation," *Cambridge Sentinel*, 24 May 1919, p.8; and "Society Will Seek to Extend Recreation in the Local Community," *Cambridge Tribune*, 24 May 1919, p.1.

31 *Cambridge Chronicle*, 21 October 1922, p.1.

32 In 1921, the Union moved from its original building on Burleigh Street near Main and Portland streets (Burleigh, which no longer exists, was becoming increasingly light industrial establishment) to the more residential Spring Street. 33 Articles in the Cambridge papers describe children's plays presented by the Women's Educational and Industrial Union as well as benefits for the YWCA.

34 Smith Alumnae Quarterly, Vol. XII, No, 3, May 1921, p.245, and "Elizabeth B. Jackson," *Cambridge Chronicle*, 12 February 1921, p.4.

35 "Protest Against Allen W. Jackson," *Cambridge Chronicle*, 21 June 1924, p.16; Allen N. [sic] Jackson's Name Rejected," *Cambridge Sentinel*, 21 June 1924, pp.1,8; "A Grudge Responsible for Action of Council," *Cambridge Tribune*, 28 June 1924, p.1; "A Question for Cambridge [Letter reprinted from the *Boston Transcript*], June 24, 1924," *Cambridge Tribune*, 28 June 1924, p.2.

36 The correct reference: The three tailors addressed a petition of grievances to the House of Commons on behalf of the people of England. (Wood, James, ed. Entry for "Tailors, the Three, of Tooley Street." *The Nuttall Encyclopedia*, Warne & Co Ltd. London. 1900.

37 The records of the Town of Lincoln's Building & Engineering Department provide evidence that the house at 9 Page Road was designed by Jackson.

38 On December 24, 1944, just six days short of his 19th birthday, PFC Lucius Jackson (66th Infantry Division Massachusetts) boarded the Belgian troopship Léopoldville in Southampton to cross the English Channel for France. Carrying over 2,200 reinforcements for the Battle of the Bulge, the ship was torpedoed by German submarine U-486. Although the Léopoldville was within five miles of Cherbourg, rescue operations were delayed, and more than 800 lost their lives, including 768 U.S. servicemen. The bodies of 493 men were never recovered. The name of PFC Lucius Erskine Whiton Jackson is on the Tables of the Missing at Mount Auburn Cemetery.

Whether the Jacksons received letters from survivors in their son's division is unknown. Indeed, the division's survivors were told not to tell anyone about the sinking of the ship, an order that was reinforced upon discharge. In April 1945, the German submarine U-486 was torpedoed and sunk off the coast of Norway. This horrific chapter in a war of unimaginable horrors was the subject of a History Channel documentary, *Cover Up: The Sinking of the SS* Léopoldville (1998), as well as a National Geographic Channel special (2009).

A final note on the death of Jackson's youngest child in World War II: In late 1917, Jackson wrote a prescient letter questioning the wisdom of imposing harsh terms on Germany – terms later recognized as being at the center of the forces that led to World War II (Allen W. Jackson, "What Is a Guaranty?" Correspondence, *The New Republic*, December 15, 1917, p.185).

39 As quoted in "Current Periodicals: A Review of the Recent Architectural Magazines," *The Architectural Review*, November 1918, p. xxvi.

Endnotes: Jackson Family of Newton

1 At the time of his death, Edward Jackson also held two "man-servants" in bondage. Three generations later, his descendant William Jackson gave his time and money to the abolitionist cause. (See "Confronting Our Legacy: Slavery and Anti-Slavery in the North" on Historic Newton's website, as well as the organization's online exhibit, "Seeking Freedom in 19th-Century America.")

2 Timothy Jackson was at Lexington in April 1775, and the following year shipped out of Salem on a privateer. According to family accounts, he experienced dramatic – film-worthy – captures and escapes from British prisons. For more, see "The Jacksons and Their Homestead" on Historic Newton's website.

3 The Jackson Homestead, located at 527 Washington Street, is on the Register of National Historic Places. In 1949, the Homestead was given to the City of Newton by a Jackson descendant.